Chapter-2

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
The concept of women empowerment is gaining a lot of importance and deep rooted globally, not only in developed economies but also in developing economies. More emphasis is on policy front in India where women constitutes around 50 percent in the total population. The women empowerment implies building capacity of men, women, families, communities and institutions for restoring women’s control over their lives and destiny. It involves creating in political, economic and social environment which enables them to gain and control over the means that are essential for leading socio-economically productive and healthy lives. The equal rights of men and women were enshrined in the charter of United Nations in 1945. Over the years several initiatives particularly the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the four international United Nations conferences on women have generated awareness and action agendas at both the international and national levels. The socially determined gender roles of women and men have historically placed women on unequal relations in social, economic and political decision making. As a result women have had less than equal status in terms of their access to and control over the means of health and development.

Women have to perform multiple roles like wife, mother, homemaker, worker, entrepreneur and citizen in the global economic environment. Women are engaged in a wide variety of occupations, especially, in the unorganized sector and also women do like sowing, transplanting and harvesting in agricultural sector. They worked in the handlooms and handicrafts as weavers, wage earners and unpaid family workers. United Nations Development Programme report indicates that while 67 percent of the world’s work is done by women only 10 percent of global income is earning by women and mere one percent of global property is owned by women.
Literally empowerment means ‘to invest with power’. Power is defined as the ability to influence the behaviour of others with or without restraint. Lips define power as ‘influence and control’ which explain the absolute and unchangeable characteristics. But Max Weber’s definition of power as the ability to ‘make others do irrespective of their own wishes and interests’ implies the relational aspect of power as it is not inherent but exists in relationships. It can, therefore, be inferred that power is created in relationships and hence power relationships are concomitant on changes in power possessors. Feminist scholars like Miller, Bookmen and Morgen have emphasized relational power and empowerment of women refers to this broader perspective. According to Bhatiwal, the concept of women’s empowerment in the present context emerged precisely through interaction between feminism and popular education which developed in Latin America in the seventies of last century. Women empowerment and gender justice put social transformation at the centre of the agenda of human development and progress.

Women empowerment gains significance in the Indian context owing to their profuse participation in developmental activities. Women empowerment can’t be rigidly defined, particularly, in India where there is a lot of difference among women in different sectors such as rural women Vs urban, organized sector Vs unorganized, public sector Vs private, educated women Vs uneducated and women in lower income and higher income groups. All these differences are crucial factors to reckon with, before to define and analyze the concept of empowerment of women. In the words of Bharadwaj empowerment of women is basically determined by their socio-economic status. Socio-economic status would, therefore, be a ranking of an individual by the society she gives in the form of her material belongings and cultural possessions along with the degree of respect, power and influence she wields. The empowerment is immensely influenced by socio-economic, political and cultural factors. The
economic status, therefore, is assessed in terms of material wealth, power and influence of women in the society.

Empowerment occurs when the outcomes are equal rights and entitlements in a situation of all around development and reaches a stage where each individual becomes an equal partner in progress conforming to Albert Camus view 'don't walk behind me I may not lead, don't walk in front of me, I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be a friend'. According to Sen and Batiwala empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both control over resources and over ideology a growing intrinsic capability, greater self confidence and an inner transformation of ones consciousness that enables one to over come external barriers. Empowerment endows women with the ability to gain control over resources, develop physical and psychological capacity to challenge the prevailing gender norms and ensure change. It varies in social divisions basing on class, caste, gender and economic resources. The essence of the definition is that empowerment is not meant for domination over others but to acquire power to achieve goals and ends. Empowerment involves not only changes in access to resources but also an understanding of ones rights and entitlements. It also implies that gender roles can be changed and gender equality is possible.

The need for empowerment of women arises in India because the sex specific roles, rights and obligations are not different and they also tend to be unequal. In almost every sphere of human functioning, the gender roles defined for women are subordinated to those defined for men. Generally men exercise greater power than women in every sphere of human life. Besides, men often have culturally and legally sanctioned power over women and have greater control of, and access to resources and information. The subordination in the rights and roles of women over men calls for employment of women not for domination over men but to exercise equal control over resources on par with men. This was the spirit of the contents of National policy for the
empowerment of women (2001) which states that the goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women by creating an environment through positive, economic and social policies for full development of women to make them to realize their potential 

Women empowerment involves economic opportunity, property rights, political representation, social equality and personal rights. Historically the world over, either by law or custom, the status of women is undermined by personal relationships in decision making, social rights and access to resources. Women in many countries still lack rights to inherit property, own land, get education, obtain credit, earn income and control their family. According to Amartyasen, women are less likely to secure favourable outcomes for themselves in household decision making process. They feel that their long term security lies in subordinating their well being to that of male authority figures. Empowerment by means of modest income generation projects is not sufficient to improve prospects for a high quality of life for women.

Initiatives to women empowerment

It is generally believed that socio-cultural changes play a very important role in creating empowerment of women. In one of the International Labour Organization (ILO) studies dealing with women's employment, it was presumed that motives differed with marital status both objectively and subjectively. Not only the economic needs but the motivational reasons also vary with marital status. They broadly mention two reasons viz. women's economic needs and the national necessity for increased production. The Ministry of Labour, Government of India has identified the following four factors which led women to seek employment in India. They are

- The inadequate and insufficient income of the principal earner which forces women to work and supplement the income

- Mishaps, such as incapacity of the bread winner, death of the bread winner.
• A woman’s longing for economic independence or for securing higher standard of living.

• There is also a desire on the part of the women to give expression to their own talent and skills.

Women in the post-independence period

Indian constitution had guaranteed equality among all the sections of the society through suitable economic policy and social welfare programmes. Even after 60 years of Independence, women of the nation, constituting around 50 percent of the population have faced the problems of poverty, social discrimination, violence, oppression, suppression, depression and marginalization. The women in social and political life are equally important for their integration in the developmental process, because development is not merely economic but also participation in social and political life. The significant relationship between the role and the status of women and the ultimate economic well-being of the family is reflected in the bulk volume of literature on women studies. However, in view of the special nature, the most of the works done by the women and their total contribution towards the family and the national economy, employment of women increases day by day.

Legislative and legal provisions to women

The state has enacted the following women specific and women related legislations to protect the women against social discrimination, violence, atrocities and to prevent social evils like child marriage, dowry system, rape and practice of sati etc. Hindu Law, as administered by the courts in the period of British rule, was not solely based on the texts of the Hindu Dharma. It was a combination of Shastric Law, custom and case law to protect the tradition and culture of women. The Government of British in India, through its legislative power, introduced principles and laws which may be significant deviation from the traditional Hindu personal law, the permanent establishment of British rule in India by the middle of the 19th century and the impact of their culture on the
Hindu invoked agitation for special reforms in all the spheres, particularly, in the upliftment of the Hindu women. Law is a potent tool capable for establishing gender justice and the destiny of women. This work is concerned the changing position of Hindu women in modern period for historical perspective on the basis of the rights accorded by law to them in regard to marriage, divorce, widow remarriage, sati regulation, property, succession, adoption and minority and guardianship. There is much legislation passed both before and after the independence in order to improve and empower women particularly widows.\(^{15}\)

The factories Act 1948 (amended up to 1976) provides for establishment of crèche where thirty women are employed. The immoral traffic (prevention) Act of 1956 as amended and renamed in 1986 makes the sexual exploitation of male or female a cognizable offence. Hindu succession Act of 1956 enables Hindu women to inherit or bequeath the property of their fathers along with their brothers. The maternity benefit Act of 1961 makes the extension of maternity benefits mandatory on the part of factories. The medical termination of pregnancy Act of 1971 legalizes the abortion by qualified professionals and humanitarian or medical grounds. The Equal Remuneration of Act of 1976 provides for equal pay for equal work for both men and women. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1976 rises the age for marriage of girl from 15 to 18 years and makes offences under this act. Amendments to criminal law of 1983 provide for a punishment of seven years in ordinary cases of rape and ten years for custodial rape cases. The maximum punishment may go up to life imprisonment. An amendment brought in 1984 to the Dowry Prohibitions Act of 1961 made subjection of women to cruelty a cognizable offence. The second amendment brought in 1986 makes the husband or in-laws punishable if wife commits suicide within seven years of her marriage. It is also included a new criminal offence of dowry death in the Indian penal code. The new enactment of indecent representation of women (prohibition) Act of
1986 and the commission of sati (Prevention) Act 1987 have been passed to protect the dignity of women and prevent violence against them.

**Constitutional Provisions to Women**

The constitution of India is not only grants equality to women but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the socio-economic, educational and political disadvantages faced by them. To be more precise, the Article 14 confers on men and women equal rights and opportunities in the political, economic and social spheres. Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste and sex. Article 15(3) makes a special provision enables the state to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Article 16 provides equal opportunities in matter of public appointments for all citizens irrespective of men and women. Besides the above fundamental rights, the constitution also enshrines the following directive principles of state policy. Article 39(a) mentions that state shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens, men and women equally the right to means of livelihood, while Article 39(c) ensures equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 42 directs the state to make provision for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief for women. Above all the constitution imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen through Article 15(a) and (e) to renounce the practices decoratory to the dignity of women.

The recent and important legal measures have not only eradicated the handicaps of the Hindu widow, but have also raised the status and rights of women. The fact that more importance has been given to the social conventions than to law among the Hindu, has made Hindu women in general and Hindu widow in particular, behind still in the fast changing world.
Development during plan era

The time we are passing through is the time of speaking out for women, writing about women and doing something for women. It is fact that women have been receiving some importance in each and every draft of five year plans as well as in each term of political parties at different times in our country. Developmental policies and programmes both in the women specific and women related sectors put into action through various five year plans have brought forth a perceptible improvement in empowering women.

First five year plan

In 1953, the government of India set up Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) blending the governmental and non-governmental resources and creating a network of agencies to deliver services in maternity and child care, health education and training to women.

Second five year plan

In 1958, the Central Social Welfare Board introduced a socio-economic programme to promote women’s economic activities. The Mahila Mandals were established in the form of production units of handicrafts, handlooms, dairy, sheep, poultry, breeding and allied activities to enhance women employment. They were expected to work with Gram Vikas as a team of work for women bringing to them new knowledge and information for effective utilization of households. Women Social Education Organizers were appointed to impart social education to women and promote community participation.

Third five year plan

In the beginning of the third five year plan the major emphasis lay on the rural development programmes and again shifted to agriculture, food shortages and self-sufficiency in food grains and the village level workers. The applied nutrition programme was introduced during this Plan. The objective of
Imparting nutrition education in the programme was implemented through women's gross root organizations.

**Fourth five year plan**

In the fourth five year plan, a special central sector scheme for rural women, composite programmes for women and pre-school children are introduced with the components of nutrition and economic activity for women workers. This scheme was implemented in non-applied programme blocks. The other two schemes are incentive awards to Mahila Mandals and training of associate women workers.

**Fifth five year plan**

During this plan Mahila Mandals were introduced to promote local leadership among rural women viz,

- the scheme was to utilize the potentiality of these organizations in the implementation of various programmes for the development of women and children.

- the concept of minimum needs was introduced in this plan. They are provided elementary education, primary health care and nutrition, drinking water, house sites and other basic amenities.

- the new division for women's welfare and development was established with in the ministry of social welfare entrusted with the task of coordinating and initiating policies for women development.

- the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 initiated the process of removing wage disparities between men and women in the productive sector.

- the planning commission appointed a working group on Employment of women in 1977.
Sixth five year plan

In the sixth five year plan (1980-85), for the first time in India's developmental planning, included a chapter on women development. The women's economic independence would accelerate the improvement of the status of women.

- in the rural development sector the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) has high priority for women
- decision was taken that minimum of one-third of the beneficiaries under the Training for Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) programme would be for women
- the scheme of Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was started in 1982-83 as pilot project in 50 blocks of the country
- separate Universities for women have been established in states of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh
- a major step was taken by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to encourage the women's participation in the field of science and technology by enhancing 10 years of age eligibility for women scientists
- approximately 3000 women were given training in modern skills and provided employment under the scheme of employment and income generating production centers for women

Seventh five year plan

In the seventh five year plan, an integrated multi-disciplinary approach has been adopted covering employment, education, health and nutrition. The science, technology and income generating activities are included to enable women to participate actively in socio-economic development. This document
observed the significant role of women in vital areas as attitudes to education, health care, nutrition and reduction of infant mortality.

*Eighth five year plan*

This plan makes a shift from development to empowerment of women. The number of measures has been taken by the government in this direction for social, political and economic development of women. The objective of the plan was to remove the socio-cultural and administrative constraints to realize their full potentiality and bring in greater social awareness of their contribution to national development. The thrust in this strategy was on the formation and strengthening of grass root level women's groups to play an important role in decentralized planning and implementation of programmes of employment, education, family welfare, drinking water and sanitation etc.

*Ninth five year plan*

The ninth five year plan document underlined that development policies and programmes both in the women specific and women-related sectors put into action through various five year plans have brought forth a perceptible improvement in the socio-economic status of women in the country in order to overcome man made deprivations. It also provides the basis for women's empowerment. Some important thrust areas of empowering women as the agent of social change and development strategies are

- to create congenial environment for women to exercise their rights, both within and outside the home, as equal partners along with men through early adoption of National policy for empowerment of women.

- to legislate reservation for not less than 1/3 seats for women in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies and thus ensure adequate representation of women in decision making
• to adopt an integrated approach towards empowering women through effective convergence of existing services, resources, infrastructure and manpower in both women specific and women-related sectors

• to organize women into self help groups and thus mark the beginning of a major process of empowering women

• to accord high priority to reproductive child health services and thus ensure easy access to maternal and child health services

• to ensure easy and equal access to education for women and girls through the commitments of the Special Action Plan of 1998

_Tenth five year plan_

The context of adopting human development is the ultimate goal of all over developmental efforts, empowerment of women and development of children. The process of empowering women initiated during the ninth five year plan is expected to continue through and beyond this plan. Of late adopted National policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) has been taken into action. The women organized into self-help groups started during the ninth plan to provide them for a permanent articulation of their needs and contribute their development. These groups have been very effective institutions at gross root level in facilitating access to women. Therefore, encouragement of self-help groups to act as the agents of social change, development and employment of women.

_Women developmental programmes_

The government has been implementing various programmes and schemes for mainstreaming the empowerment of women. The programmes aim at providing special facilities to women for education, health, training and opportunities for gainful employment. The purpose of various programmes is to provide those essential services for women which are not available to them under general developmental programmes.
**Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)**

It is aimed at empowerment of women and later Mahila Samruddi Yojana (MSY) is merged with this programme.

**Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA)**

This programme aimed to enable the women to take up income generating programmes to train women for employment in the traditional sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, dairy, handlooms and handicrafts. It is exclusively for women oriented scheme. It was started in 1983 and it is now in operation in 450 Districts of the country with UNICEF assistance.

**Mahila Samakya**

It is a women’s movement which has transformed the lives of women in 14000 villages in 60 districts of 9 states of India. It is an awareness programme by the ministry of HRD, in pursuance of the National Policy on Education 1986 as updated in 1992. This programme covers an area of education, health, human rights and governance with an objective of creating a gender just society. The new strategy of Mahila Samakya has introduced Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya scheme which seeks to reach the unreached or hard to reach the girls. These schools are located in rural areas where the female literacy rate is low. There are about 750 Vidyalaya’s are functioning to promote school education in the country.

**Mahila Sangh**

The objective of the scheme is to enhance the self image and self confidence of the women to create an environment where women can seek knowledge and information and empowerment. The funds earmarked for the Sangh, however small can be deposited in the banks or post offices and can be used collectively by women for a period of three years.
Nari Adalat

The major thrust of the movement is to prevent all forms of violence against women. The women's courts have emerged as credible alternative redressal forums accessible not only to Sangh women but also to the general community at large.

Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM)

It is stipulated that women are to form at least one third of the beneficiaries under the scheme of TRYSEM. Credit from the banks and subsidies to the beneficiaries who are living below poverty line is provided for self-employment and income generating activities in a variety of sectors like weaving, handicrafts, animal husbandry and agricultural activities.

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)

The scheme was started in 1993 with a view to provide credit support to the poor for meeting their credit needs. The poor women are encouraged to start income generating activities such as dairy, agriculture and allied sectors.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

The scheme is intend to help the poorest of the poor, small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, rural artisans, weavers and other weaker sections with the help of government subsidy and institutional finance. Under this scheme forty percent of the beneficiaries drew from women folk.

Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY)

It was launched in April 1989. The major objectives of JRY are generation of additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under employed in the rural areas and creation of productive community assets for direct and continuing benefits to the target groups. Thirty percent of the employment generation under this scheme is meant for women.
Swayam Sidha

It is an integrated project for empowerment of women through self-help groups with an emphasis on services.

Swalamban

The main aim of the scheme is to provide training and skills to women in order to make them employable or self employable under this scheme training is imparted in computer programming, medical transcription, electronic assembling, radio and television repair, garment making, handloom weaving, handicrafts and community health work.

Socio-Economic Programme (SEP)

It has been implemented by Central Social welfare Board to provide work and wage to the needy women such as destitute widows, deserted and handicapped.

Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

This programme was launched in 1987 to upgrade the skills of poor and assetless women with a view to securing employment on a sustainable basis in traditional sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying and handloom weaving.

Hostels for Working Women (HWW)

Under this scheme financial assistance is provided to NGO’s, co-operative bodies and other agencies involved in women’s welfare. The aim of the scheme is to provide cheap, safe affordable accommodation for working women whose house away from the work place or single woman.
Day Care Centers for the children of working women.

There are 31 projects funded under the scheme. National Policy on Empowerment of Women was adopted in 2001 with the objective of ensuring women of their rightful place in the society by empowering them as agents of socio-economic change and development.

Institutional support for women development

There are a good number of financial institutions that support women to start new ventures and products. They are National Agricultural Bank for Rural Development (NABARD), Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Council for Advancement of Peoples Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), Women Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs and Reserve Bank of India.

The National Policy for empowerment of women (2001)

The objectives of the National Policy are

1. To create an environment through positive, economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potentiality.

2. To provide equal access to participate and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of nation.

3. To provide equal access of women to help their quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and social security.

4. To strengthen the legal systems to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

5. To mainstream the gender perspective in the development process.
Therefore, devise and implement women specific, anti-poverty and empowerment programmes are necessary to bring about radical change in the lives of women.

**Categories of empowerment**

**Educational empowerment**

Education is the most powerful instrument for empowerment of women. It is the key which opens door to life, develops humanity and promotes national development. It enables women to acquire new knowledge and technology required for improving and developing their tasks in all fields. Education is used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. The national system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will develop new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators. This is an act of faith and social engineering. Women are promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged taking up active programmes to women’s development. Major emphasis is to be laid on women’s participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The Government policy of reimbursement of fee in all professional courses helps to promote technical education of women in rural areas. There are today more than 450 community polytechnics in the country out of which about 100 are women polytechnics. They are acting as platforms of transfer of technology from urban to rural areas. Training in these polytechnics is free and there is no age bar for admission.

Education is one of the most important social indicators that is directly linked with human resource development. Education enhances an individual’s freedom and allows making use of economic opportunities. Education is directly associated with gross domestic product, population growth and health. Education is recognized as a basic input for empowerment to individual and overall development of the society.
Women empowerment contributes to social development. Economic progress in any country whether developed or under developed could be achieved through social development. The empowerment is immensely influenced by socio-economic, political and cultural factors. Empowerment of women is basically determined by their socio-economic status. The nation has made progress in developing women's capabilities, but inequalities continue to exist between women and men. The low status of women is the outcome of a variety of causes in which patriarchal values reinforced by tradition media and other socio-political institution play a major role. Thus, the institutional base of women's oppression has to be sensitized to accept the gender equality and moreover, women's perception of themselves would also need to be changed. Health and nutrition are two important basic needs for empowerment of rural women. To achieve real development in health sector an extensive as well as intensive 'Health Education and Awareness Campaign' (HEAC) needs to be given top most priority and it should mainly stress on Nutritional education, benefits of immunization, family planning etc.

Female subordination has been an eternal and essential feature of human life in all contemporary societies. One of the important manifestations of this women subordination lies in the division of labour which provides a cheap and ready source of labour. Division of labour between the male and female is culturally imposed and this segregated role pattern has led to a structural subordination of women to men. However, structural subordination of women to men has not been able to prevent them from playing a vital role in the development of the society. Especially, their active participation in economic activities has become common. Participation of women in socio-economic activities is a global issue. Women play a pivotal role in the socio-economic activities and have now become an integral part of global market. In the developed countries, many of which are now characterized by full employment and still there is room for more women in the work force. On the
other hand, in the developing countries which are marked by labour surplus, the income of the families by and large is now imperative and the families require the assistance of all additional earners. In the economic vulnerability of the family, women members are compressed to go for work supplementing the increase of income of their respective families. Thus women play a vital role in the social and economic transformation of the country.

**Economic empowerment**

Economic empowerment is an employment and income generating activity. The ultimate objective is to make all women economically independent. The empowerment of poor women is the only means for poverty eradication. Financially increased access to credit liberates them economically and socially. Loans ensure the women, employment and income. The self help groups not only providing credit, but also empower women socially and economically. They encourage women to participate in decision making in the household, community and local democratic sector and prepare women to take up leadership positions. The women need to have control over resources like land, buildings and establishments, so that they can take decisions and implement them in a right way. Ownership and control over productive assets will create a sense of belongings and owning. It will help to take responsibility in family and local group activities. Other impact of control is to enhance their decision-making ability to meet some physiological needs like self esteem and confidence. Micro credit programmes extend small loans to women for self employment projects that generate income allowing them to care for themselves and their families.

Women contribute greatly to economy. They are pioneers in various professions. Women are working in different sectors of the economy as agricultural labourers, road construction workers, domestic helpers, petty craft women, self-employed women, doctors, engineers, lecturers and white collared executives. The hard work of women in house hold and unorganized sectors are unrecognized and unrewarded, but the situation in organized sector is different.
Most of the women do not get an opportunity to work in organized sector. In fact, the gross inequalities are recorded in gender wise employment in organized sector in India. Collectivization has been recognized as a tenant of women's empowerment. It has been defined as a process of bringing a group of women together at a base to become an integral part of an economic activity. Organizational efforts should be made for integrating farm women into development\(^2\). Organizations of Mahilamandal, Mahila co-operative societies, self help groups will help the women. The control of these organizations should be in the hands of women them selves and also beneficiary approach to women's development should replaced by participatory approach.

**Technological empowerment**

Though women are involved in all most all agricultural operations, in rural areas yet, they have inadequate technical competency due to their limited exposure to outside world. This has compelled them to follow the age old practices which in turn result in poor work efficiency and drudgery and needed computer, internet latest information\(^4\). Capacity building and empowerment are important for which there should be decentralized capacity building among the rural women particularly farm women. Empowerment projects should go beyond the provision of basic social services for all. They should include components vital for enabling the poor to participate in economic activities. It is important to develop the skills among women in order to increase their productivity and to keep them abreast of modernization and technological changes for being competitive in the market.

Training is an important component of HRD which enhances knowledge, skill and attitude. For building technical competency among farm women, need-based skill-oriented training programmes to reinforce their role in farm activities need special attention\(^5\). In order to cater the technological needs of rural women, women specific technologies should be developed. While evolving technological practices used by women should be paid due to attention for blending with the frontier ones for greater adoption. Also there is
need to strengthen linkage between various research and extension organizations engaged in transfer of technology.

**Political empowerment of women**

Political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in shaping and sharing of power and in the value by society. The political empowerment is the only catalyst, which will bring about perceptible change in the role of women. The United Nations Organization estimates that the last decade of the 20th century, only 3.5 percent of the world's cabinet ministers were women in half of the world national policies are made without their participation, as women had no ministerial position in about 93 countries of the world. As a whole, men sit on 90 percent of the Parliament seats leaving less than just 10 percent for women.

The Indian constitution guarantees political equality through the adult franchise and the right to equality, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. The equal political status will not be realized by mere declaration in the constitution. Voting in the elections does not bestow equal status. If adequate opportunities to take part in the deliberations of the nation are not provided participation has no meaning at all. The socio-economic conditions are not conducive for the effective participation of women in political affairs. Political equality is meaningless in a country where the mass of population suffers from poverty, illiteracy, inequality of class status and power. Apart from these, women suffer from traditional attitudes, which made them to feel that they are unequal. The political background of women shows that they are far away from an equal status along with men. Women are politically not active and do not come forward to participate in the public affairs. The organization explains the political profile of the women.

The problem of equal status and equal participation must be understood in the context of Indian society. In a traditional society like India the participation of women in public life is not encouraging, since women are
keeping low profile as far as political life is concerned. Though women become members of political parties, their percentage is very low. When the question of closeness to political parties arises, the current situation is not also encouraging. Apart from political activity, the part played by women in other social activity is minimal due to various reasons.

Women's representation has not exceeded eight percent any time in the parliament. The Indian state has attempted to reduce this gap by the method of reservation at the local bodies of self governance. Even in the reservation provided by the new Panchayat Act, women presidents are reluctant to discharge their function. They are obliged to have their spouses as back seat drivers in discharging their functioning. Lack of proper education and necessary orientation are hurdle for their effective functioning. Social obligations and traditional control of women folk by family members and their commitment to household work are major obstacles for women representatives to function effectively.

Reservations provided to Scheduled Caste (SC) women or general women suffer due to lack of committed representatives. Hence, the need of the hour to empower women folk is to provide necessary political education and proper orientation. Further, political will on the part of administrators to curtail male domination and enlarge avenues for the women by negating gender weakness will help to a large extent in the empowerment of women.

The 73rd Constitutional amendment provides reservation for women to the tune of one third of the total number of seats in local bodies. But it is observed that reservation for women is passive and women are not interested on the governance of Panchayat Raj Institutions, only close relatives will enter into Panchayat. Women are only proxy members and they do not participate in the decision making process, blame their kin assume all powers, sometimes by even threatening them. As per India is concerned, the participation of women in Indian national movement created a tradition of female involvement in
politics. In post-independent India, women were appointed as international delegations and ambassadors. It is found that women's level of participation has improved their response to political rights conferred by the constitution. The overall statistics indicates that women's participation though improving is yet so small as to be discouraging particularly compared with men. Women in India, according to the 2001 Census, represent 49.6% of country's population, now occupied the center place in the development of the country. All the efforts of the government have been directed towards bringing women into the mainstream of the national development process by raising their overall status like social, political, economic and legal on par with men. The states have adopted measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the social, economic, educational and political disadvantages that could be facing. The women's 33 percent reservation is not effectively implemented. The Table 2.1 appraises the women representation in various lok Sabha from 1957 to 2009.
Table 2.1

Women Representation in the Lok Sabha (1957-2009)

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<tr>
<th>Lok Sabha</th>
<th>Total seats</th>
<th>No. of women contested</th>
<th>No. of women elected</th>
<th>Percentage to total</th>
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<td>1957</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>544</td>
<td>599</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election commission of India, 2009.

A cursory glance at table 2.1 indicates that the number of seats own by female rose from 27 in 1957 to 44 in 1984. In relative terms the percentage of female M.P’s in Lok Shaba was 5.4 percent in 1957 and it surged to 8.1 percent in 1984. Later it was decreased to 5.3 percent in 1989 but once again increased to 9 percent in 1999. These statistics clearly reveal that the representation of women in Lok Sabha, the highest decision making body in the country, is lower than their legitimate share. The efforts of the government to bring about one third reservation in Indian parliament has been thwarted by certain vested interests accustomed to power.
Table 2.2
Women Representation in the Rajya Sabha (1990-2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Rajya Sabha Total Seats</th>
<th>No. of women Nominated</th>
<th>Percentage Elected to total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Election commission of India, 2009.

The Table 2.2 reveals the total seats of Rajya Sabha are same from 1990 to 2009, but the nomination of women has been fluctuating. In the year 1990 it was 24, immediately in 1992 it was reduced to 17 members and in the year 2004 it was raised to 20 indicating rather diminishing role of women and again it was increased to 25 in the year 2009 with a slight increase in women representation. Political experience is a favourable factor for women empowerment. The political parties should encourage women in large numbers and various assignments should be given to them so as to acquire leadership qualities. The party and the family members should work hand in hand to strengthen the newly elected members especially in the case of inexperienced members. The Islam does not constrain in any way the political participation of Muslim women in socio-political activity. The Mohal committee also encourages Muslim women to participate in political activity. The encouragement and help from their family members and husband are the main source of power to women and it enable them to play their role effectively.
Women entrepreneurship in Indian scenario

Traditionally, it was believed that women are physically and mentally weak and hence they are not fit for hard, hazardous and risky tasks. But with the ever-increasing empowerment of women in the world, now no job, profession or enterprise is without participation of women folk. Women entrepreneurship is the process where women take lead and organize a business or industry and provide employment opportunities to others. Though women entrepreneurship is a recent phenomenon in India, which came into prominence in late 1970s, now more women are venturing as entrepreneurs in all kinds of business, economic activities and service sectors. Though at the initial stage women entrepreneurship developed only in urban areas, later it has extended its wings to rural and semi-urban areas too.

Women industries mainly fall into informal sector where less than 10 persons with or without power and less than 20 persons without power are engaged and they will be of labour intensive and rely on indigenous resources, family ownership and only small scale skills are sufficient. Though earlier women concentrated much on traditional activities, due to the spread of education, favourable government policies towards development of women entrepreneurship, women have changed their attitudes and diverted towards non-traditional activities too. They show favourable response to changing situations and get adjusted to them and have improved their position. The government and non-government organizations are giving a lot more prominence to promote self employment among women and build women entrepreneurship. Special financial assistance provided and training programmes are organized for women to start their ventures.
Literacy and education

Education plays key role in widening human knowledge. Knowledge can easily spread its tentacles throughout the world. Literacy is necessary for social and economic development of the country. This is the main indicator used to assess the development. According to the population Census, literacy rates in Andhra Pradesh have gone up during the last four decades. This raise noticed in both the sex-wise (male-female) and region-wise (rural-urban). As per 2001 census, the percentage of literates increased from 24.57 percent in 1971 to 36.43 percent in 1981 (Table 2.3). The percentage of literates gone up to 61.11 percent in 2001 as against 44.08 in 1991. The literacy rate of the state is lower than the all India literacy rate of 65.38 percent (2001 census). Literacy rate in Andhra Pradesh is much lower than the all India level during the last four decades (Table 2.3). The gap is more in the case of male literacy than female literacy. Female literacy has recorded a significant improvement in the state compared to the all India level. This could be attributed to the literacy campaign focused on women (Akshara Sankranthi) in the state in 2000. Between 1991 and 2001 literacy rate of females is lower than that of males. Literacy, particularly among females, is found most important determinant of various demographic indicators like birth rate, death rate, fertility, infant mortality rate, economic empowerment etc. Unfortunately, 48.8 percent of women and 29.1 percent of men are still illiterates. With the launching of a number of programmes like literacy missions, Maa Badi (our school), Chaduvula Pandaga (education festival) etc., the situation is likely to improve in the near future.
Table 2.3
Trends of Literacy Rates in India and Andhra Pradesh (1971-2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>India</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Andhra Pradesh</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>45.96</td>
<td>21.97</td>
<td>34.45</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>15.27</td>
<td>24.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>56.38</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>43.57</td>
<td>47.65</td>
<td>24.87</td>
<td>36.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>64.13</td>
<td>39.29</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>55.12</td>
<td>32.72</td>
<td>44.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>75.85</td>
<td>54.16</td>
<td>65.38</td>
<td>70.85</td>
<td>51.17</td>
<td>61.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Work Force Participation Rate (WFPR) in India

In India there are gross disparities in Work Force Participation Rate between male and female. It has become essential for women to come out of their house due to various reasons. These include domestic necessity, soaring prices of goods, modern life style desire to acquire knowledge and education and to maintain independent economic status. The global level of statistics on work force participation rate clearly indicate that female as labour force aggregated around 39 percent in 1980 which marginally grew to 40 percent in 1997. While in developed countries like Europe and Central Asia have high rate of work force participation around 47percent, in poor countries like South Asia has very low work force participation of around 34 percent in 1980 which in fact decrease to 3 percent in 1997.

The WFPR in India for the census years 1901 to 2001 are shown in table 2.4.
It is clear from the table that the male work force participation rate was 51.6 percent where as female work force participation rate was 22.7 percent in 1991. The provisional result of 2001 census has shown a significant increase in female work force participation from 22.7 percent to 25.7 percent, as against moderate increase in MWFPR from 51.6 to 51.9 percent, thus showing gender gap of 26 percent in the work force participation rate. In case of WFPR by sex, it has been very high for males as compared to females owing to the social status of women. They are generally not allowed to undertake productive work outside home. But since 1971 their work participation rate has been increasing. It rose from 14.2 percent in 1971, to 25.7 percent in 2001. This is due to increasing literacy and declining birth rate. Now, women are eager to enter into the industrial, administrative and service sectors. With urbanization and

### Table 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Reports for various years  
Note: NA: Not Available
expansion of employment generation of different sectors provide them an opportunity to women empowerment. As a result the work participation rate for men declined from 52.7 percent in 1971 to 51.9 percent in 2001.

Access to income and property

The important factor, which influences, status of women, is women's ability to earn and independent income through paid employment. This opportunity tends to enhance the social standing of the woman in the household and in the society. Being less dependent on others, her contribution to the prosperity of the family and to the society would be more visible and she will have more voice in decision making in the family. Economic independency is certainly an indispensable move towards achieving women empowerment. A comparison of workload on men and women bring out startling inferences. An employed women puts in more than twice as much as an employed man, however, her income for her work is little more than one fourth of a man. Therefore, women's access to income reveals that the share of women in total income is awfully low.

Women's right to inherit, own and control property are determined by the values and norms, which are socially acceptable, as well as the mechanisms of intra-household decision making and distribution. The primary objective of inheritance system in Indian society has been to preserve property especially landed property intact for male heirs. Under the Hindu Succession Act 1956, a Hindu girl is entitled to a share in the property of her parents, along with her brothers. Bina Agarwal argues that land is the most important productive resource for women in India. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Krishnaji whatever is the spirit of law and custom women fail in general to obtain rights to ownership of land. He added that even though women were the formal legal owners, management of land was taken over by men depriving women not only of headship in a formal sense, but of much else. The legal reforms so far have not been adequate to give women a right to property on the same terms as men. It varies with religion. Even where law has given a right, conventions and
practices do not recognize them. Women themselves relinquish their rights, women as daughters, wives, mothers and sisters tend to lose out and often suffer deprivation. So empowerment of women will be improved if the social movement is backed by legal reforms to enforce property rights and an equal social status in the society.

**Women’s empowerment and rural development**

Empowerment of women is the main objective of all development policies and programmes. The success of any empowerment programme depends on the perception of the concerned women folk. Deliverance from poverty and self sufficiency will naturally lead to economic empowerment. All developmental programmes could be planned properly and implemented effectively in order to gain self-sufficiency and self-reliance. United Nations commissions on status of women say that women constitute half of the world’s population, accomplish about two thirds of its work hours, receive one tenth of the world’s income. The following measures can strengthen self employment in rural area in the service sector which will generate additional income leading to economic independence of women.

- To identify the innovative and high income generating activities suitable for women.
- To encourage women to take up part-time jobs while being in the house itself, to earn additional income to support the family.
- To develop entrepreneurial abilities of women by organizing special types of training.
- Central and State Governments have to make emphasis on untouched areas in the service sector to involve women.
- Government has to establish a separate mechanism at the central, state and district levels to look after women’s employment and their problems
• To organize women labour in the service through women’s association, co-operative societies and self-help groups.

• To develop infrastructural facilities and supportive services like, building, transportation and to look after the children.

• To create awareness among the women about technical and financial assistance available to women entrepreneurs and to encourage them through concessions and incentives to enter into the service sector related to women.

• Government should encourage research and development in service sector to find out high income generating activities suitable for women.

Women are very important segment in the rural development of the nation. Economic independence and education of women will go a long way in attaining self-reliance for women. The awareness of the women and their willingness, confidence, self-motivation and encouragement from family and society contribute for empowerment of rural women.

Gender perspective

Development is a continuous process. Development without a gender perspective is only half development. If one gender left behind, there can’t be real development even for the dominant gender. To pursue a development planning strategy without women in development focus would be wasteful and self defeating. It is wasteful because of the potential laws of contribution of vital human resources and self defeating because development which does not bring about its benefits to the whole of society. Women constitute almost fifty percent of the world’s total population, rich human resources for development but seen as under utilized resource for development. The vast human resource is the key agent in any society for its development and organizational strength. The need and importance of human beings as an asset to the organization is gaining importance. When we talk about this vast human resource we must not
forget about the women power. It requires that the capabilities of women be improved, discrimination be removed and women have the opportunity to become active participants in changing scenario of the society. This will involve ensuring equal access to education and employment opportunities.

Social development, always, has the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Women must be seen as an active change force and not as victims of change. We find today women broke barriers and proved that they are an equal status with men. They proved their competence and worth in every field of justice, diplomacy, technology, politics, administration and teaching. Eliminating gender inequality leads to significant productivity gains and will enhance poverty reduction efforts. Effective and proper mobilization of women ensures their active participation in development process and helps to empower them through self reliance. The society cannot achieve its potentiality without investing in developing the capabilities of women and encourages their empowerment. But in the most developing countries women have less access to education, jobs, income and power than men. In the last few years, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of women participation in economic activities and this becomes a way for an improved resourcefulness.

Therefore, the gender is an important component of all development activities and without gender perspective development is only half achieved. So women are significant players in the process of change and development. They are the prime movers of the society. Gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also of good economics. Women are the true strength of the nation. United Nations general secretary Kofi Annan has rightly stated that the gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a pre-condition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting, sustainable and building good governance.
Empowerment of women in handloom sector

Indian economic development is to be reviewed in the light of the socio-economic factors, preservation of the traditional skills of the people and the use of available resources. Handlooms have a great potential in this regard as they hold the key, not only for sustaining the existing crafts persons but also for providing gainful employment. The village and cottage industries to which the handloom industry belongs are oriented towards balanced socio-economic development of our country owing to the built in mechanism that encourages weavers and crafts persons to seek an honorable place in the society. The industry occupies a place of importance in our country’s economy chiefly by virtue of its employment potentiality. This sector today, with about 35 lakhs looms, provides employment to 65 lakhs persons out of which about 60 percent are women.

Women play an important role in development of human society. The dignity of women in the society provides an exact measure of the development of the society. Our late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru has observed that to awaken the people it is the women who must be awakened, once she is on the move the family moves, the nation moves. Handloom industry, being a cottage industry, is mostly carried on in the weaver’s home sets. There are various stages in the process of production as winding, sizing, warping and weaving. The entire work from beginning to end is shared by all members of the weavers’ family including children. Weaving is done both men and women, it is surprised to note that large number of women work full time on the looms. It is an indication that the women participation is increasing in handloom sector.

In fact, in no period of history has such revolutionary change taken place, as is taking place today. But change from a position of lower status of women in the nineteenth century to a position of equality in the middle of the twentieth century is not a simple case of progress of women in the modern era. The constitution of India provides for equal rights and privileges for men and
women, and makes special provisions for women to help them to improve their status in society. Special provisions under the different plans have been made to uplift the position of women. Many socio-economic programmes were also started under the plans. These programmes aim at providing special facilities to women for education, health, training and opportunities for gainful employment. The main purpose of various programmes under the plans is to provide those essential services for women which are not available to them under the general development programmes. It is observed that the reasons for backwardness of women in relation to the status of development are early marriage, dowry system, illiteracy, lack of economic independence and social customs and traditions. The degree of their miseries may change from rural to urban, from community to community and family to family, but the basic social attitude of looking at them as inferior beings are universally the same.

Today, development is human development. It is a process of enlarging the choice for all people not just for one section of the society. Such type of developmental process becomes unjust and unfair if women are excluded from the benefit of participation. The women’s development in earlier phase of developmental planning was mainly welfare oriented. Women’s education during sixties receives utmost priority along with the measures to improve maternal, child health and nutrition services. There was a paradigm shift in the holistic approach from welfare to development during the seventies, which stated recognizing women as participants of development. In eighties adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with special thrust on the three-core sectors of health, education and development. Accordingly, priority was given for implementation of programmes for women under different sectors of agriculture, handlooms, handicrafts and cottage industries. Realizing the role and contribution of women in development, in nineties made a beginning and concentrating on training-cum-income generation programmes for women with an ultimate objective of improving economic empowerment of them. Even after sixty years of independence, women constitute around fifty percent of the
population are facing the problems of poverty, social discrimination, violence, oppression, marginalization and unemployment. The women in social and political life are equally and immensely important for their integration in the developmental process as development is not merely economic but also participation in social and political life which carries its own status. The women and their total contribution towards the family and the national economy, employment of women is immensely and incessantly increasing day by day. Therefore, women play vital role in the social and economic transformation of the country.
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